

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7447

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT BF

SUBJ: MUHAMMAD ALI VISIT - SPINY LOBSTER AND CHARGES OF RACISM

REF: NASSAU 1831

1. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM NASSAU MUHAMMAD ALI CONFIRMED THAT HE AND HIS BUSINESS ASSOCIATES ARE INVESTIGATING A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES IN THE BAHAMAS AND PARTICULARLY THE PROSPECTS FOR FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY. ACCORDING TO ALI, THE BAHAMAS WAS "ONE OF THE MAIN PLACES" UNDER CONSIDERATION BY HIS MUHAMMAD ALI NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPORT CORPORATION AND HE AND HIS GROUP WERE "LOOKING INTO THE FISHING THING HERE AND WE GOT TO BUY A BUNCH OF BOATS, BUT IT'S A LOT OF HARD WORK".

2. ALI'S RHETORICAL STYLE AND CONFESSED LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED UNDERTAKING MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE JUST WHAT WILL BE INVOLVED AND WHERE THE MATTER ACTUALLY STANDS. WITH REGARD TO HIS CORPORATION, HOWEVER, HE DID SAY THAT (A) IT PLANNED TO OPERATE IN 16 COUNTRIES AND HIS AGENTS WERE ALREADY PRESENT IN TWO OF THEM, (B) THE GOVERNMENTS OF THESE COUNTRIES WERE BEING PERSUADED TO BUY SOME OF THEIR BASIC IMPORTS (FERTILIZER, WHEAT, AND RICE) THROUGH THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CORPORATION, (C) ALI'S PRINCIPAL ROLE WOULD BE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE

OF HIS ACCESS TO AND CONTACTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INVOLVED TO FACILITATE CONTRACTS. HE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT HIS OBJECTIVE WAS TO BECOME A BILLIONAIRE ALTHOUGH HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE WILL USE HIS ASSETS TO ASSIST BLACK PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. QUESTIONED ON WHAT BAHAMIANS WOULD GAIN FROM HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOCAL FISHING INDUSTRY, ALI RESPONDED THAT "THEY WILL BE WORKING. THEY WILL DO ALL THE WORK. WE ARE FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE." THIS WAS AMPLIFIED BY HIS PROMOTER, DON KING, WHO STATED THAT "WE ARE THINKING OF ANYTHING THAT WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT TO GIVE DIGNITY AND PRIDE TO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE THE INHABITANTS TO SORT OF MAKE THE POWER MAKING DECISIONS OVER THEIR OWN DESTINY IN THE COMMUNITY." ALI CONCLUDED THIS PORTION OF THE QUESTIONING BY SAYING THAT EVERYONE KNEW THAT HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN EXPLOITING HIS FELLOW BLACKS "SO WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO ANSWER A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO."

3. PRESS CONFERENCE ALSO TOUCHED ON QUESTION OF WHY ALI SHOULD INTRODUCE RACISM INTO ISSUE AND REFER TO BAHAMAS AS A "BLACK COUNTRY" WHEN THERE WERE ALSO WHITE BAHAMIANS LIVING HERE. ALI RESPONDED THAT ALL HE HAD SEEN WERE BLACKS, THAT WHITES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD HAD EXPLOITED BLACKS "AND THAT IF YOU AREN'T CAREFUL THEY WILL OWN THE COUNTRY AND YOU WILL BE SLAVES AGAIN." ALI'S COMMENTS AND ACTION UPON ARRIVAL SATURDAY (HE GAVE THE BLACK POWER SALUTE AND REMARKED HOW PLEASED HE WAS TO BE ON BLACK SOIL) HAVE ALREADY EVOKED SEVERAL LETTERS OF PROTEST TO THE EDITORS OF BOTH NASSAU PAPERS AND A LONG AND STINGING EDITORIAL IN THE AFTERNOON "NASSAU TRIBUNE" WRITTEN BY ETIENNE DUPUCH ENTITLED "MUHAMMAD ALI POISON". DUPUCH BERATES PLP AND PINDLING FOR "THE CHEAP PUBLICITY STUNT", FOR ALLOWING BLATANT RACISM TO BE INTRODUCED IN BAHAMAS AT OPEN INVITATION OF PRIME MINISTER AND FOR BEING USED AS THE "TOOLS TO SERVE THE SELFISH ENDS OF ALI'S MANAGER, A SELF CONFESSED RACKETEER AND JAILBIRD WHO IS USING ALI TO INGRATIATE HIMSELF WITH BLACK GOVERNMENTS."

4. COMMENT: THE FALLOUT FROM THE ALI VISIT IS NOT OVER -- ANYTHING BUT. THE FNM CHARGES HAVE ALREADY PROVEN PARTIALLY TRUE, ALI HAS REVERSED HIMSELF PUBLICLY ON WHAT BROUGHT HIM HERE, AND ALL THAT REMAINS IF FOR THE OPPOSITION TO ZERO IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON WHAT, IF ANYTHING, THE PLP PROMISED TO INDUCE THE VISIT. THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TOLD SPECIFICALLY AND REPEATEDLY OVER THE LAST YEAR THAT THE LOBSTER BELONGS TO THEM AND IS INDEED THEIR ONLY NATURAL RESOURCE. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THEY CAN NOW BE EASILY PERSUADED TO SEE IT TURNED OVER TO A FOREIGNER AND HIS ASSOCIATES NO MATTER WHAT THEIR CREDENTIALS ARE, AND ALI'S, IN THE DEVOUTLY CHRISTIAN AND MORE TRADITIONAL BAHAMAS, ARE NOT THE BEST. ALI'S RACIAL SLURS HAVE FURTHER

DETRACTED FROM THE VISIT AND IT IS NOT IMPROBABLE THAT BRADLEY ROBERTS, CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE OF THE PLP, WHO ALLEGEDLY THOUGHT UP THE VISIT, AND THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO OBVIOUSLY APPROVED IT, ARE HAVING SOME STRONG SECOND THOUGHTS. WITH REGARD TO THE LATTER, WHO IS BOTH HIGHLY EDUCATED AND URBANE, HE MUST STILL BE WINCING FROM ALI'S REMARKS AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE WHERE AFTER POINTING OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA WAS A MUSLEM, HE WENT ON TO SAY "JUST LOOK AT THE PRIME MINISTER HERE, SO HUMBLE AND NICE. THE GOVERNMENT MEN ARE MY BROTHERS AND THEY KNOW I LOVE MY PEOPLE..." ON THE OTHER HAND THERE IS NO DENYING THAT ALI'S VISIT CAPTURED THE PUBLIC ATTENTION. PRESS COVERAGE WAS EXTENSIVE AND GENERAL IMPRESSION WAS ONE OF IDOLATRY FOR THE BLACK WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION. EXTENSIVE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN BY OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES SUGGESTS THAT THEY BELIEVED VISIT WOULD HELP PLP. IN BRIEF CONVERSATION BETWEEN AMBASSADOR AND MINEXTAFF ADDERLEY, AMBASSADOR WAS SURPRISED TO FIND ADDERLEY GENERALLY HIGH IN HIS PRAISE OF ALI AND HIS VISIT, DESPITE FACT THAT SOMEWHAT PATRICIAN MINEXTAFF WOULD BE LAST PERSON ONE WOULD EXPECT TO ADOPT SUCH A VIEW.  
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## Message Attributes

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